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LEBANON/U.S.
EMBASSY ATTACK

RATHER: Over the past 24 hours, President and candidate Reagan made an effort to shift blame for lax security in the U.S. Embassy attack in Beirut. He blamed his predecessors in office, apparently trying to switch responsibility on to Jimmy Carter. White House spokesman Larry Speakes denies that. Other reactions have been swift and many. David Martin reports.

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MARTIN: President Reagan today was busily backing away from his attempt to blame the latest terrorist bombing in Beirut on cuts made in intelligence operations by previous administrations. PRESIDENT\RONALD\REAGAN: I will answer your questions about the way you have distorted my remarks about the CIA.

MARTIN: The president didn't have anything to say later, but here's what he said yesterday to a student audience. REAGAN: We're feeling the effects today of the near destruction of our intelligence capability in recent years.

MARTIN: Although President Reagan didn't mention Jimmy Carter by name, the former president took offense. JIMMY\CARTER: It's personally insulting and too gross in its implications to ignore.

MARTIN: Even Vice President Bush agreed that the Carter administration can't be blamed for what happened in Beirut. VICE\PRESIDENT\GEORGE\BUSH: I don't think anyone can say that. But I do believe that there were cuts made in the intelligence business that, ah, were inappropriate.

MARTIN: Bush should know. He headed the CIA during the Ford administration when, according to two former intelligence officials interviewed by CBS News, the agency's budget reached its low point, the result of cutbacks following the pullout from Southeast Asia. But classified documents show it was Jimmy Carter and his CIA director, Stansfield Turner, who increased the budget. SEN.\DANIEL\MOYNIHAN (Select Intelligence Committee): And they rose under Mr. Carter in each of his budgets, and they have risen under Mr. Reagan in each of his budgets.

MARTIN: Despite the budget increases, Turner is remembered as the man who eliminated 800 jobs from the CIA's operations branch. Turner insists those cuts did not hurt. STANSFIELD\TURNER (former CIA director): The Carter administration did not reduce one intelligence operative overseas. We did cut back on some of the bureaucratic fat in Washington.

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